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Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Houston Havens (662) 299-0273, email: houston.havens@wfp.ms.gov

Darrin Hardesty (662) 588-2596, email: darrin.hardesty@wfp.ms.gov

The following report is a compilation of public and private land waterfowl hunting reports and wetland habitat assessments during the week ending January 12, 2020.

Jackson, MS – Mississippi experienced another week of mild temperatures followed by weekend rainfall last week. Ongoing and forecasted rain later this week will continue to add to an already high level of wetland habitat across the state. As creeks and rivers continue to rise, many have expanded past their natural banks and have experienced natural flooding. The lower Mississippi River is currently rising, approaching flood stage for multiple locations. Water levels in Steele Bayou have risen over the last week and the current water level for the Steele Bayou (landside) gauge is 88.39 feet as of 11:00 am on January 14. Due to these high-water conditions in Steele Bayou, both Phil Bryant and Mahannah Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) will be open for waterfowl hunting daily with no draw permit required until further notice. However, water levels will limit access to these WMAs. A break in the warm, rainy weather is currently forecasted to arrive this weekend and extend into the middle of next week, with below-freezing temperatures and north winds. These conditions may cause additional southward movements of waterfowl into Mississippi from northern latitudes.

Hunting reports from state WMAs and private lands across the Mississippi Delta improved overall over the last week. Gadwall and mallards made up a large portion of waterfowl harvest reports. Very large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese are still commonly seen across the Delta region and waterfowl hunters have taken advantage of the abundant opportunities. The availability of quality waterfowl habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence harvest in the coming weeks.

For more information regarding waterfowl in Mississippi, visit our website at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl or call us at (601) 432-2199. The Waterfowl Program website lists links to hunting regulations, migration reports, and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state. The early January aerial waterfowl survey experienced some weather delays but has now been completed. Survey results and distribution maps are expected to soon be posted on MDWFP's Waterfowl Program web page. The final aerial survey for the season is planned to begin next week.

Table 1: Average waterfowl harvest per man-day reported over the past week for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

| WMA | Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Canal Section | 2.13 |
| Charlie Capps | 3.50 |
| Howard Miller | 0.69 |
| William "Billy" C. Deviney | 1.00 |
| Mahannah | 2.00 |
| Malmaison | 1.59 |
| Muscadine Farms | 0.18 |
| Okatibbee | 0.64 |
| O'Keefe | 1.23 |
| Old River | 0.00 |
| Pascagoula | 0.56 |
| Pearl River | 0.60 |
| Phil Bryant | 1.15 |
| Shipland | 0.80 |
| Trim Cane | 1.80 |
| Tuscumbia | 0.00 |
| Twin Oaks | 0.00 |

Sunflower WMA Flooding for 2019-20 Waterfowl Season

Due to prolonged backwater flooding throughout most of the spring and summer of 2019, water control structures in the green-tree reservoirs (GTRs) will not be closed to capture water for the 2019-20 hunting season on Sunflower WMA. However, hunters are reminded that there are approximately 5,200 acres of low-lying sloughs, lakes, and other wetlands scattered across Sunflower WMA. Most of these areas have water control structures in them and will be the first areas to flood on the WMA. These natural, low-lying areas often provide better habitat and hunting opportunities than the GTRs. A map of Sunflower WMA wetland areas can be found here:

<http://www.mdwfp.com/media/256111/sunflower-wma-gtrs-and-slough-areas.pdf>